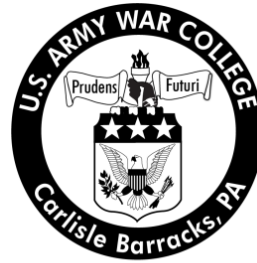


The Bush Doctrine – Roadmap or Relic?

by

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The United States has lacked a definitive grand strategy since the end of the Cold War. In the wake of 9/11, the Bush Doctrine consisted of four fundamental tenets: do not discriminate between terrorists and nations that support them, engage emerging threats overseas, confront threats before they fully materialize, and advance liberty and hope as alternatives to repression and fear. Current U.S. foreign policy is consumed with crisis management rather than following a long-term game plan with a coherent set of objectives for managing the complex global environment. When viewed as a comprehensive framework for achieving U.S. objectives, the Bush Doctrine provides several critical and enduring concepts fundamental to a long-term strategy. In and of themselves, the Bush Doctrine's tenets cannot serve as the sole basis of foreign policy; but broadening their core objective from eradicating terrorism to addressing extremism and international instability imbue these tenets with an enduring utility for shaping American foreign policy. The realities of U.S. capabilities, the emerging operational environment, and the political aspirations of the nation's electorate codify certain elements of this doctrine as ideal and realistic strategic imperatives for the 21st century.

THE BUSH DOCTRINE – ROADMAP OR RELIC?

The United States has lacked a definitive grand strategy since the end of the Cold War. The containment policy which resulted from the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and culminated in National Security Council Document 68 (NSC-68) provided a method for evaluating and implementing foreign policy consistent with national objectives. Containment of communism and spreading democracy and freedom were simple concepts with grand ramifications. A new grand strategy, capable of unifying American efforts the way NSC-68 did, is needed and that strategy must align with America's core values. Developed in the aftermath of 9/11, the Bush Doctrine consists of four fundamental tenets: do not discriminate between terrorists and nations that support them – both must be held to account, engage emerging threats overseas before they attack the homeland, confront threats before they fully materialize, and advance liberty and hope as an alternative to the ideology of repression and fear.

The first tenet – do not discriminate between terrorists and nations that support them¹ – provides an important mindset for deterring terrorist actions. The nation-state continues to dominate the world order. Extremism, whether religious or social, must be considered in the context of this order. Failed (or failing) states, poor economic conditions, and extremist beliefs can all facilitate terror; however individuals or groups engaging in extremism must reside somewhere. If a nation-state facilitates, or knowingly tolerates, such behavior it must be held to account. The second tenet – engaging threats overseas before they attack the homeland² – helps to define the engagement environment. In no way does this concept prevent engaging home-grown threats; however, it outlines the importance of engaging the world community early and often.

Confronting threats before they fully materialize goes hand-in-hand with the second tenet of this doctrine³. By engaging the world community as part of a comprehensive foreign policy, the ability to stand firm with those opposed to extremism in any of its forms while aligning against emerging threats provides the capability to identify and confront threats as early as possible and maximizes the chances of defeating the threat before it matures. Finally, advancing liberty and hope as an alternative to repression and fear⁴ epitomizes the goal of spreading values such as freedom and economic prosperity to promote a safe and secure world community. This tenet is fundamental to the other three and provides the underlying idealistic interest for U.S. foreign policy ends.

There are several reasons why this doctrine is questioned as a viable course of action: misinterpretation, failure to view the doctrine comprehensively, focusing on specific actions taken vice the strategic implications of the entire doctrine, and strong personal biases against its namesake have each played a part. This paper will not attempt to validate specific U.S. undertakings as part of this doctrine, but rather provide the reasons the doctrine itself has sound, viable, and exceptional elements. Developed by the Bush administration's foreign policy team, this doctrine provides several concepts with enduring utility for interacting in the operating environment of the foreseeable future. Not all of its authors agreed with the actions it facilitated, given that sound policies can result in questionable actions based on insufficient evaluation. The ultimate question is whether the doctrine effectively outlines certain strategic ends and nested ways to help achieve U.S. objectives going forward.

After discussing the individual tenets in detail and examining the reasons many doubt their applicability, this paper will examine its benefits focusing on the significance of leadership in the development and implementation of a grand strategy. Specific areas of interest include international responsibilities, emerging threats, the changing global environment, and the court of world opinion. Elements of this doctrine are feasible, acceptable, and uniquely suited to achieve U.S. interests across the globe, assuming a need for American leadership as opposed to mere participation.

While the doctrine's foundation focused on the implications of terrorist threats, its tenets provide a valuable methodology for dealing with the more applicable threat of international instability and solidifying a credible and sustainable world order in line with America's interests. Since the end of the Cold War, American foreign policy has been consumed with putting out fires and dealing with crisis management rather than following a long-term game plan with a coherent set of objectives for managing the complex global environment.⁵ Both the reality of U.S. capabilities and the political aspirations of the nation's electorate codify elements of the Bush Doctrine as both ideal and realistic strategic imperatives for the 21st century.

The Bush Doctrine Defined

The four tenets of the Bush Doctrine are simple and straightforward at first glance; however their strategic ramifications are complex. The events of September 11, 2001 played a critical role in its development but to label the Bush Doctrine as a reaction to this event is an over-simplification. Each tenet carries with it an implied end state; determining how to accomplish these ends and, more importantly, understanding the reasons behind them is critical to understanding their inherent benefits and how they reinforce each other synergistically as parts of a comprehensive doctrine or strategy.

These tenets provide a framework for interaction on the world stage that will not only address the very real threat of terrorism, but engage the international community to achieve a stability and order beneficial to all.

Do not Discriminate Between Terrorists and the Nations That Support Them.

According to Joint Publication 3-07.2, terrorism is “the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological.”⁶ Although there is effectively universal agreement that terrorism is counterproductive on the international stage, the essence of this tenet is the linkage between individual extremists or extremist organizations and nation states. This linkage may be readily apparent (i.e. Iran and North Korea), but more often will require detailed analysis to achieve consensus.

The desired end state associated with this tenet is a world in which nation states universally abhor extremism and condemn it on the international stage. Additionally, this end state requires not only words, but actions as well, to be effective. Any viable U.S. strategy must effectively address extremism and outline a strategy for dealing with it in the world community. Two fundamental questions stem from this concept: who are the extremists that perpetuate terror and why do they take action? Failure to understand both of these points will greatly hamper one’s ability to identify the enemy and, more importantly, to understand how to modify that enemy’s behavior to achieve the desired end state.

Sun Tzu said, “know the enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles you will never be in peril. When you are ignorant of the enemy, your chances of winning and

losing are equal.”⁷ By knowing one’s adversary and his motivation, implementing a strategy to effectively modify his behavior and achieve the desired end state becomes easier. The problem with this conclusion is that putting it into practice can be difficult.

When a religion, culture, or other non-state entity has desires that conflict with a nation state’s objectives, it can be difficult to determine who actually speaks authoritatively for the non-state entity. In representative governments there is an assurance that leadership elected by the people makes decisions for the whole. When dealing with non-state actors, there is often no single, credible group with which to engage. In this case, knowing one’s enemy and his motivations becomes much more challenging. Effectively addressing this uncertainty increases the probability of success exponentially and is fundamental to sound foreign policy.

Application of the first tenet of the Bush Doctrine has utility here. The U.S. is, and will remain, the dominant world power for the near future. Further, the American people have an expectation of security and international order. Based on these assumptions, the U.S. has a responsibility to identify those responsible for extremist actions and to take action to prevent their occurrence. Globalization has made the linkage between extremists and nation-states more difficult to define in many ways; however it does remain fundamentally important. Pluralists argue that global threats have marginalized the importance of individual states, implying that the Westphalian state system is archaic and declining in relevance to international affairs.⁸ According to Craig Nation, however, “the case for the decline of the state can easily be overstated. In fact, states remain the building blocks of international society and have to be mobilized to confront new global challenges.”⁹

By linking those responsible for negative actions to the nation states from which they operate or receive support, two objectives are accomplished. First, those nations who facilitate extremist behavior will understand that America, and the world community, will hold them to account. Second, those nation states will realize that failure to address internal extremist threats in an aggressive, overt manner will ultimately result in American action. Further, when effectively coupled with the other tenets of this doctrine, the accountability and action will not be solely American; rather meted out by the international community.

Some may argue that linking terrorism to nation states is problematic, especially in failed, or failing, states. This is true; however the first step toward eradicating any threat remains assigning accountability. As long as sovereign states dominate the landscape, effectively determining responsibility is a necessary step. Failure to hold someone accountable results in inaction and encourages those with extremist agendas to operate with impunity. Allowing nation states to claim ignorance or to look the other way breeds indifference. Holding nations that support or facilitate radical behavior responsible for the actions of the identified extremists makes sense and provides incentives to identify, investigate, and ask for assistance when needed in combating global extremism. To be effective, however, those incentives must include timely and definitive international support to nation-states seeking assistance in controlling/preventing such internal threats.

Practical application of this tenet occurred in Afghanistan when its message was clearly articulated by the U.S. response to the Taliban regime and its sheltering of Al Qaeda leadership. While the Taliban may not have tacitly authorized or conducted the

attacks of 9/11, they did harbor the primary conspirator. Given the opportunity to turn him over for accountability, they opted for continued asylum of the individual. This provided a relatively clear invocation of the right to self defense, codified in Article 51 of the UN charter.¹⁰ The utility of this objective is being further tested, at least to some degree, in Iran. While its WMD program is of primary concern, Iran's tacit support of extremist organizations, such as Hezbollah, is also shaping international responses. The potential value of this tenet applies to encouraging Iran, through either soft or hard power, to stop supporting activities in both Afghanistan and Iraq that destabilize or advance an agenda of violence which thwarts the democratic aspirations of the people of those countries.¹¹

Thus, the first tenet of the Bush Doctrine is essential to accountability in a world where nation states dominate the political landscape and extremism is a legitimate threat. This accountability is also essential to attaining and maintaining a world order that fosters stability and predictability among its members.

Engage Threats Overseas Before They Attack the Homeland. America cannot afford to return to a time of isolationism. International engagement through partnership building and synergistic application of the elements of national power is a fundamental concept of achieving U.S. interests both abroad and at home. Threats can occur anywhere and to address them overseas the U.S. must be actively engaged with as many host nations as possible – specifically its allies, partners, and friends. The second tenet of the Bush Doctrine is a critical enabler of this concept and focuses on an end state of a more united and capable international community with common values and interests.

The 2010 National Security Strategy (NSS) of the United States focuses on “building and integrating the capabilities that can advance our interests and the interests we share with other countries and peoples” and “building new and deeper partnerships in every region to strengthen international standards and institutions.”¹² This wording is very similar to the previous two NSS’s and outlines the importance of engaging threats forward in concert with like-minded nations. Engagement and partnership building are critical means to encourage behaviors supportive of the NSS by countries across the globe. Additionally, phase zero operations provide examples for host countries to emulate, supported by training and a series of milestones for the purpose of increased modernization and reform. By partnering with militaries in strategically significant locations that possess common interests for global peace and stability, this action results in trained forces capable of assisting in a wide range of military operations when needed. Ideally, if coupled with other aspects of national power (e.g. diplomacy and economic policies), this will result in a synergy to help defend and promote common interests for the world community. According to Jullien, when discussing the work of Sun Tzu, “victory is simply a necessary consequence – and the predictable outcome – of the imbalance that operates in his (the engaging nation state’s) favor and that he has been able to influence.”¹³ Shaping the world stage through honest and committed partnership building efforts results in a world community more willing to support and defend the universal values of what is right and just, along with providing precious resources from multiple sources required for other military operations and limited wars.

The ultimate goal of this approach is to create a world community capable and willing to act in concert through shared responsibility and common values in order to

promote peaceful solutions to conflict and engage threats militarily if required. Engaging threats overseas before they threaten the homeland is a fundamental capability for a non-isolationist, globally-focused world leader. The benefits of this tenet not only include enhanced protection for the homeland, but also a more engaged and capable world community committed to common interests such as security and international order. The second tenet of the Bush doctrine is an essential quality of an international power that operates in a globalized environment.

Confronting Threats Before They Fully Materialize. This tenet is the most controversial, yet vital, element of the Bush Doctrine. It goes hand-in-hand with the second tenet – engaging threats forward – while also encompassing emerging domestic dangers as well. Additionally, the topic of prevention takes center stage here. The implied end state of this tenet is to identify significant threats in their infancy, take action to prevent their maturation, and minimize their potential impact.

Perhaps the most significant transnational threat of the 21st century involves weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Many other issues have the potential to alter the joint operating environment; however WMD, regardless of their specific form, are the primary threat controlled by human beings. Weather events, pandemics, peak oil, and the like can have catastrophic consequences and planning for them is essential. However, WMD events are instigated by fellow human beings and, unlike the aforementioned threats, do not materialize in a vacuum. They are planned, resourced, and executed by people.

Stopping these events before execution is the goal of this tenet and perhaps the most immediate concern of the Bush Doctrine. Clearly, aligning partnership efforts

discussed with regard to tenet two is a critical first step; however this tenet requires a steadfast commitment from the nation to act alone, quickly and aggressively, when required. This concept accounts for much of the controversy over the fundamental meaning of the Bush Doctrine. The invasion of Iraq in 2003 is the quintessential example of this tenet in action. Identification of a significant threat, articulated to the world community, prompted action in an aggressive and timely fashion. The only problem was that the threat turned out to be difficult to prove at best and manufactured for political reasons at worst. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to investigate the details of Iraq's WMD program, it is important to note that the Bush Doctrine did not cause Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF); intelligence, interpretation, and aggressive leadership were the foundations of action. It is also important to note that a failure to understand the enemy, as discussed with regard to the first tenet, also contributed to OIF. Saddam Hussein believed he needed the perception of Iraq possessing a WMD capability. Regional stability, at least in his mind, depended on it. Apparent external (Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait) and internal (Kurdish rebels) threats fostered a belief that to comply with United Nations inspectors and acknowledge a lack of WMD capability was a clear and present danger to his regime. More accurate framing of the operating environment may have resulted in other options for dealing with Iraq; however the tenets of the Bush Doctrine certainly did not necessitate the resultant action. Environmental perceptions led to the conclusions that required action.

At its core, the Bush Doctrine's third tenet redefines the concept of self-defense to include preemption.¹⁴ The difference between preemption and prevention is significant. Article 51 of the United Nations charter authorizes the use of armed force

when a member is “attacked” or to “maintain or restore international peace and security.”¹⁵ The third tenet is not universally supported by the world community as there are different interpretations regarding what maintaining or restoring peace and security actually encompasses; however in a post 9/11 world dismissing the importance of preemption is irresponsible. The difference between preemption and prevention is ultimately a temporal question. The risk, the probability, and the imminence of a threat provide justification for action.

Confronting threats before execution is critically important to the security of our nation and our allies – the less definitive part of this tenet is determining when that confrontation moves from preemption to prevention. Anticipatory action is no different from action to “maintain peace and security” if the danger is clear and present. It therefore follows that actions taken under this tenet can range from shaping an environment through any element of national power to major combat operations against nation states. According to Schelling, “WMDs make it possible to do monstrous violence without first achieving military victory.....victory is no longer a prerequisite for hurting an enemy.”¹⁶ The salient point here is that the 21st century involves emerging threats fundamentally different from times past. Failure to contain them before they mature may result in catastrophic consequences, making the risk of ignoring or avoiding the architects exponentially more dangerous. Conventional war is no longer the worst case scenario, making this tenet even more critical to providing security both at home and abroad. Equally important, however, is an accurate perception of one’s surroundings coupled with extreme prudence prior to taking unilateral, preemptive action.

Advancing Liberty and Hope as an Alternative to Repression and Fear. This tenet is the common thread of the Bush Doctrine and the underlying end state of the entire strategy. Further, it serves as both an end and a way of achieving our foreign policy goals. According to George W. Bush, “the fourth prong is both idealistic and realistic.”¹⁷ This assessment is accurate – and why many refer to this tenet as the freedom agenda.

Hope and liberty are essential building blocks throughout America’s founding documents. One needs look no further than our Declaration of Independence to find the concept of “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”¹⁸ However, hope and liberty are not simply American ideals. Freedom can have a transformative effect, as it did in Germany and Japan following World War II and as it continues to evolve in post Cold War Russia.

While case studies abound for comparing the value of liberty versus repression, the worthiness of this tenet fundamentally rests on our nation’s enduring belief that spreading hope and liberty is in the national interest. Some will argue that meddling in the value sets of other states is wrong. Accepting the relevance of the Bush doctrine requires a belief that moral relativity is an oxymoron and that a free society with political leaders held responsible by the governed is superior to a repressive society with non-representative governance. The complexity of this tenet results not from this belief, which is binary, but from its implementation as part of a larger foreign policy. Afghanistan and Iraq provide examples of the Bush Doctrine being implemented as policy; however they do so through a primarily military lens with other means of national power in supporting roles. The Bush administration made it clear that these should be the exception, not the rule.

The freedom agenda was not primarily a task of arms. Advancing freedom requires encouraging dissidents and democratic reformers suffering under repressive regimes (such as Iran, Syria, North Korea, and Venezuela) and advocating for increased freedom through diplomatic channels with less repressive Nations (such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Russia, and China).¹⁹

The Bush Doctrine provided a strategic framework for engaging the world community; specific actions taken must be considered individually and in light of environmental interpretation. Comprehensive strategies, such as the Bush Doctrine, are roadmaps while specific actions are often dictated by individual perceptions.

Reason for Doubt – Dissenting Opinions

The tenets of the Bush Doctrine provide a sound basis for policy, however only when viewed as part of a comprehensive strategy. In fact, if not viewed holistically, individual tenets can be misinterpreted especially if viewed as reasons for specific actions. Context is important. Viewed solely as a response to 9/11 and as a method for stamping out terrorism, the doctrine is perceived as simplistic and unilaterally focused. Most criticisms of the Bush Doctrine have gained traction due to this fact. When examined through a larger aperture, however, its tenets possess enduring utility for global interaction and achieving lasting international stability and predictability. Iran's possession of nuclear weapons, for example, poses both an existential threat to Israel and other nation states in the region and serves as a destabilizing element in the Gulf which provides a major portion of energy to the U.S. and its allies. Threats such as this must be viewed comprehensively and as part of one's overarching strategy.

A strategy is a framework for developing ends, ways, and means – while managing risk – to accomplish national objectives. Specific actions taken to support that strategy, on the other hand, involve strategy employment and hinge on interpretations of

events. This is a critical distinction. Holding nations accountable for their actions, effective engagement on the world stage, preventing threats from blossoming into actions, and spreading freedom and hope are strategic imperatives. Actions such as invading a sovereign nation or participating in regime change, on the other hand, are examples of actions taken in response to specific interpretations of one's operating environment and are not dictated by a strategy unless the perceptions leading to their execution are accurate. Drawing on elements of the Bush Doctrine, the U.S. may decide that a nuclear Iran is incompatible with our national objectives; however action taken because of this conclusion would be based on environmental interpretation. Several other criticisms follow, along with evaluations of their accuracy.

“Critics charge that the freedom agenda was a way for America to impose our values on others, however freedom is not an American value, it is a universal value. It cannot be imposed on a population; rather it must be chosen by the people.”²⁰ Professor G. John Ikenberry codified this opinion. He assessed that the Bush Doctrine “did not embrace the logic of liberal hegemonic order building or support the rules and institutions on which it is based.”²¹ The core of his argument was the belief that the doctrine was unilateral in nature and that it focused on a positional grand strategy vice a milieu grand strategy. The ‘positional’ view envisions a great power seeking to counter challenger states while the ‘milieu’ view imagines a great power attempting to structure an international environment interested in long-term security for all.²²

The failure of this viewpoint results from an overly narrow view regarding the idealistic nature of the Bush Doctrine, specifically with regard to its freedom agenda. The underlying message that many critics fail to understand is that the second and

fourth tenets of the doctrine stress inclusion of the world community. The 2008 National Security Strategy (NSS) focused on “the promotion of freedom, justice and human dignity” and “confronting the challenges of our time by leading a growing community of democracies.”²³ Analyzing the doctrine in a vacuum misses the importance of inclusion vice isolation stressed therein. Understanding that the overarching doctrine seeks multi-lateral approaches to transnational threats primarily through the promotion of shared values resulting in common objectives is essential. Whether this was the original intent or not is irrelevant to this discussion; the ultimate worth of its tenets are dependent upon viewing the doctrine holistically and in conjunction with supporting documents such as the NSS.

An interesting conclusion can be drawn from this holistic view of the Bush Doctrine with regard to the policies of the current administration. According to Perle, a “fundamental disconnect existed between President Bush’s policies and beliefs and the actions of his administration.”²⁴ This disconnect was the core reason for opposition to many aspects of the Bush Doctrine. Its idealistic nature was never translated into concrete policies. President Obama’s promise of change on the foreign policy front focused on the actions of the Bush administration vice its policies and beliefs.²⁵ Confronting and defeating aggression anywhere in the world, strengthening alliances and partnerships, countering WMD threats, and acting as a force for freedom in a world that demands American leadership are fundamental concepts of the recently released strategic guidance from President Obama.²⁶ With the exception of linking extremists to nation states, the philosophical underpinnings of the new guidance are very similar to those of the Bush Doctrine. Clearly, this is evidence of the enduring utility for guiding

American foreign policy and ensuring national security inherent in much of the Bush Doctrine.

Another oft-cited shortfall rests in the preemption vice prevention debate. Henry Kissinger, when addressing decision making in the nuclear world, opined, “perhaps the deepest problem is the problem of conjecture in foreign policy....if one acts early, he cannot know whether it was necessary. If he waits, he may be lucky or unlucky. It is a terrible dilemma.”²⁷ When does a threat become actionable and what action is justified in response?

Iraq is the quintessential example, but the reasons for this action were more complex than many would assert. In a 2003 interview, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz outlined four fundamental reasons for the invasion; WMD, support for terrorism, criminal treatment of Iraqi people, and the connection between WMD and Iraqi support for terrorism.²⁸ These reasons were reiterated by many in the administration, but never gained traction in the court of public opinion. Regardless of whether one supports or condemns the US actions of 2003, the decision was not a result of the Bush Doctrine itself, but rather was based on analysis of the situation and the environment. That analysis included not only WMD and terrorism, but also the need to address the terrible suffering of the Iraqi people. Unfortunately, this argument was not effectively communicated prior to the invasion.

All tenets of the Bush Doctrine could be applied to the OIF thought process; however none of the tenets required the chosen response. The ultimate course of action was a result of information available at the time and deemed to be the proper response for the given scenario. If the lack of WMD had been understood, perhaps a different

reaction would have resulted; perhaps not. The point is that available information prompted the decision; the Bush Doctrine provided a lens through which to view that information and a framework in which to consider that data. History is ripe with examples of fundamentally sound strategies resulting in questionable actions when viewed in hindsight. NSC-68 provided a successful strategy for engagement following the Second World War; however it also spawned questionable actions in Vietnam. This does not mean that NSC-68 was a flawed strategy. It simply illustrates that good policy can result in counterproductive actions if the political leadership fails to fully understand the operational environment. Preemption is an important facet of the Bush Doctrine, however it was not its defining concept and it was certainly not meant to provide unconstrained, unilateral justification in the foreign policy realm.

Critics also argue that linking rogue extremists to nation states is problematic and will not solve the underlying problem. That is true, but also misses the point. Most extremist organizations do receive support, either directly or through tacit approval, from nation states and this is the greatest utility of the first tenet. There will always be individuals and groups that are not linked to a nation; however, that number is relatively small. By linking those where we can and dealing with them through the modern Westphalian system, we can minimize the number of true non-state actors with extremist agendas and focus our attention on them directly through criminal systems. Gray areas will always exist. Saudi Arabia is an ally; however, tyrannical and fundamentalist views do persist in areas of the country. Many of the 9/11 conspirators were citizens of the kingdom. Realistically, any doctrine must account for situations involving less than perfect governments wrestling with the internal presence of extremist

ideologies. Ideally, diplomacy, patience and partnership will help root out those individuals or groups with questionable motivations.

The point is that trying to attack the vast array of terrorists through criminal justice systems is much easier with a unified world community. By holding nation states that do not ascribe to this belief accountable, the scope of the threat is lessened and the team aligned against them is increased both in numbers and capabilities.

The old approach to terrorism was not acceptable after 9/11 – treating it as a law enforcement problem rather than a national security problem. There needs to be a campaign, a strategy, a long-term effort, to root out these networks and to get governments out of the business of supporting them.²⁹

Linking extremist organizations with nation states that facilitate their activities to the maximum extent practicable is essential to a 21st century strategy.

Finally, there is a belief that the Bush Doctrine was justification for unilateral action whenever America felt the urge. Coupled with the perception of many Americans that President Bush was egotistical and overly simplistic in his world view, this idea fostered a negative response to any comprehensive foreign policy implemented by his administration. The reasoning behind this conceptual resistance could not be farther from the truth. The Bush Doctrine is actually grounded in the policies of many administrations; however its method of presentation for world consumption did present opportunities for misinterpretation. According to James Coady, “the concepts of preemption, unilateralism, and hegemony were crucial to past American grand strategies.”³⁰ Promoting democracy and freedom have been pillars of America’s foreign policy since its inception, especially after 1945. Further, Coady asserts that preemption is an extension, not a rejection, of containment and deterrence.³¹ Specifically, when dealing with WMD, confronting emerging threats before they fully materialize implies

that deterring the use of such weapons may require preventing their acquisition in the first place. Assured confidence, however, is very different from arrogance in this area. Leading a nation with a common purpose is important; however issuing orders in an arrogant manner leads to dissent. America's unique position as a hegemon and the aspirations of its citizenry for security and freedom require a leadership role in the foreign policy realm and that role requires a strong and consistent vision.

Communicating that vision is where the Bush Doctrine faced its greatest obstacle.

American Leadership and the Bush Doctrine

For the power, for good or evil, of this American political organization is virtually beyond measurement. The decisions which it makes, the uses to which it devotes its immense resources, the leadership which it provides on moral as well as material questions, all appear likely to determine the fate of the modern world.³²

The importance of American leadership in an increasingly globalized world is an essential caveat to incorporating tenets of the Bush doctrine as important principles in U.S. foreign policy. Stephen Van Evera alludes to this fact in *A Farewell to Geopolitics*. He stresses that fundamental foreign and domestic opposition to adoption of concerted national strategies without strong leadership is a natural tendency.³³ Leadership cannot be built through consensus; rather strong, consistent, value-based leadership builds consensus. Further, leadership requires vision, especially in the realm of international politics. Therefore, to truly build consensus in the world community, a nation must have a vision for the future that promotes common objectives and stems from universal values. The tenets of the Bush Doctrine, although they may be insufficient by themselves, contribute to such a vision. However, separating them from their author and viewing them as guiding concepts for the future, not as the cause of past actions, is essential.

Idealism and realism provide two distinct ways of framing this debate and the role of American leadership therein. Shortly after September 11th, 2001, Condoleeza Rice (then National Security Advisor) said, “foreign policy is ultimately about security – defending our people, our society, and our values, such as freedom, tolerance, openness, and diversity.”³⁴ This quote demonstrates the attempted blending of the idealist and realist schools of thought inherent in the Bush Doctrine.

Idealists stress the importance of values for maintaining order. Realists, on the other hand, are less concerned about the role of values and take a more Machiavellian stance. As Bunker notes, “realism and idealism must always exist in balance, with one not sacrificed for the benefit of the other, if our nation is to remain strong.”³⁵ One of the fundamental strengths of the Bush Doctrine is its attempt to combine realism and idealism. This fusion must be accomplished if the tenets discussed are to achieve enduring value.

Many leaders have attempted to achieve this coupling; however few have successfully realized it. Ronald Reagan, a strong advocate of freedom, accomplished this in his own way – trust, but verify. Trust is inherently idealistic while verification is realistic. The Bush Doctrine quantifies this dichotomy through an idealistic desire to spread hope and freedom as unifying forces while realizing that great threats, and a willingness to preempt those threats (unilaterally if necessary), are issues requiring a realistic national strategy. Its idealistic value ultimately lies not in the actions it perpetuates, as these are perception based, but in the vision it communicates.

The realistic value of the doctrine, on the other hand, stems from the current global environment. America continues to invest the equivalent of China, Russia,

Britain, France, Japan and Germany combined in its defense industry. According to Leatherman and Adams, defense spending during 2012-2018 is forecast to be 5.54 trillion dollars.³⁶ The military will decrease in real terms; however its competitive advantage relative to the rest of the world will remain significant. This reality also applies to the other elements of national power. America's vast resources coupled with the realities of globalization require leadership in the foreign policy domain. In this regard, reality demands admission that power and values go hand in hand.³⁷

A secure, stable, prosperous, and democratic world requires a realistic use of power. Nations with great power have the inherent ability to influence world affairs. Operating without a coherent, overarching strategy not only creates an unpredictable world order, it also reduces the effectiveness of America's international leadership. The tenets of the Bush Doctrine provide critical elements of a roadmap to guide internal decisions and to facilitate a global understanding of American objectives and how we hope to achieve them as a member of the world community.

One fundamental shortcoming of the Bush Doctrine stemmed from a leadership failure to effectively communicate its fusion of idealism and realism. As discussed above, the intent and characteristics of this fusion were implied. Unfortunately, this nuance was never fully realized by the nation or the international community. Understanding how preemptive action and spreading freedom and hope can coexist in a single doctrine is a complex undertaking. Unilateral, preemptive action may be required in the face of a strong and/or imminent threat; however justification of such action often directly opposes the ideal of a multilateral, consensus based approach. Further, the perception of simple-minded arrogance vice vital national interest as the guiding force

behind decision making makes reconciliation of this dichotomy even more difficult.

According to Nye, “if the US first makes an effort to consult others and try a multi-lateral approach, its occasional unilateral tactics are more likely to be forgiven.”³⁸ The key point is that American strategy should remain idealistic especially when the associated risk is acceptable, but reinforced with realism when an unacceptable clear and present danger exists. The challenge is communicating these beliefs effectively on the international stage.

Ultimately, American leadership must be representative of the electorate’s desires. Being a responsible member of the world community is fundamental to achieving that goal, but not sufficient. Americans also demand strong leadership abroad and a foreign policy that is both idealistic and realistic. Continuing to fight against poverty, disease and oppression are important ideals to the American people and fundamentally aligned with the tenet of spreading hope and freedom. Further, Americans desire security - especially in the homeland. The other tenets of the doctrine make this possible, not only at home but throughout the world as well. Realistically, great threats must be countered where and when they occur and with or without multi-lateral support. Finding the right approach to these threats is critical to success.

Clearly an approach based on values is preferable, and sought by the tenets of this doctrine; however a more realistic alternative may prove necessary in certain situations. By providing an idealistic message for achieving realistic objectives such as security, international order, and universal values, the tenets of the Bush Doctrine outline a methodology that the American people can understand and support. That idealistic message is inherent in the fourth tenet of the Bush Doctrine – advancing

liberty and hope as an alternative to repression and fear – and that message is critical to the validity of the other, more realistic, tenets.

In practice, however, exercising caution is also important. Fostering hope and freedom without preemption is always preferable, and the Arab Spring will provide an interesting case study over the next several years. While the approach taken in Libya was far different from Iraq, both situations can be examined through the lens of the Bush Doctrine. Ultimately the difference in approach stemmed from leadership decisions based on perceptions of the operating environment. The risks to America from Libya were perceived to be low and the international community expressed a common interest in addressing the problem. The tenets of the Bush Doctrine would most likely have resulted in a similar course of action based on available information. Dealing with diverse situations requires the availability of ideal solutions complemented by realistic alternatives for implementation based on acceptable risk and desired outcome. The tenets of the Bush Doctrine provide both.

Conclusion

The U.S. cannot pretend to be just another member of the world community in the 21st century. A comprehensive strategy guides policy interactions on the world stage and provides predictability and stability throughout the world. Just as America desires rational behavior from its partners, the rest of the world wants predictable and stable behavior from the United States.

The four tenets of the Bush Doctrine, although they may need some clarification in meaning and utilization, provide elements of a structure for advancing hope and prosperity through active engagement and leadership. They are not imperialistic, but rather focused on shaping the international environment through tailored responses to

accomplish their core objectives. These objectives include: holding nations responsible for their actions and assisting them in rooting out extremists, partnering with those nations when asked to help attain and maintain peace, engaging forward and confronting threats before they pass the point of no return, and spreading freedom through words and deeds in an effort to provide security, build partnerships, and achieve consensus when possible. Accomplishing these objectives inherently focuses on multilateral approaches; however unilateral action is tacitly approved if a threat is deemed grave and the risks of waiting outweigh the consequences of action.

The Bush Doctrine recognized America's role as a leader on the international stage. By enhancing security for all and promoting universal values across the globe, American leadership can build consensus and encourage others toward analogous aspirations. Fundamentally, the tenets of the Bush Doctrine provide the beginnings for developing a comprehensive approach capable of achieving U.S. foreign policy objectives in the 21st century. The Bush Doctrine alone is insufficient; but its tenets, modified to broaden their scope, should be incorporated as essential parts of a much needed American grand strategy.

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